

Message Text

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OMB-01 AID-20 A-01 PER-05 SY-04 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 SCCT-02 FBIE-00 OC-06 USSS-00 TRSE-00

SCA-01 CCO-00 OPR-02 DRC-01 /138 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1631

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 4044

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: HUTCHINSON CASE - SUMMARY, PERSPECTIVE AND ASSESSMENT

1. BEFORE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICIAL DAY BEGIN THIS MORNING, I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO SUMMARIZE THE DEVELOPMENTS TO DATE IN THE HUTCHINSON CASE AND TO ASSESS THE CURRENT SITUATION FROM SEVERAL ASPECTS.

2. ATTITUDE OF KIDNAPPERS AND HOSTAGES. AFTER THE FIRST FLUSH OF EUPHORIA AND EXHILARATION OVER A SUCCESSFUL KIDNAPPING AND TAKE-OVER OF A FOREIGN CONSULATE, MENDEZ VARGAS AND HIS COMRADES OF THE RADICAL LEFT SPLINTER 12 JANUARY LIBERATION MOVEMENT APPEAR NOW TO REALIZE THAT THEY CANNOT COUNT ON QUICK CAPITULATION BY THE GODR TO THEIR ORIGINAL DEMANDS. FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO BE INTIMIDATED BY ULTIMATUMS AND FAILURE BY THE CAPTORS TO CARRY OUT ANY THREATENED "CONSEQUENCES" IS NOT LOST UPON EITHER SIDE. CONSISTENT REPORTING BY POLANCO REVEALS THAT MENDEZ IS CALM WHILE HIS COMPANIONS ARE SHOWING SOME NERVOUSNESS. THE CONDITION OF THEIR WOUNDED COMRADE IS OF CONCERN TO THEM. TREATMENT OF THE CAPTIVES SEEMS GOOD

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UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WITH REFUSAL BY THE CAPTORS TO ACCEPT

THE MATTRESSES THE ONLY INSTANCE WHEN THEY HAVE NOT PERMITTED DELIVERY OF ITEMS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE COMFORT OF THE CAPTIVES (AS WELL AS THEIR OWN). MISS HUTCHINSON'S SPIRIT IS SUPERB AND OTHER THAN EXPECTED ANXIETIES, WE SEE NO SIGNS OF PANIC AMONG THE OTHER HOSTAGES.

3. DEMANDS OF THE KIDNAPPERS. THE KIDNAPPERS' DEMANDS ARE DIRECTED SEPARATELY TO THE GODR AND USG. OF THE GODR, THEY ARE ASKING FOR FREEDOM ABROAD FOR THEMSELVES AND THIRTY-SIX LEFTIST PRISONERS IN JAIL HERE. OF US THEY ASKED FOR ONE MILLION DOLLARS FOR HUTCHINSON'S FREEDOM. FREEDOM ABROAD FOR THEMSELVES AND PLINIO MATOS (IN JAIL) ARE AT THIS STAGE BED-ROCK DEMANDS OF THE CAPTORS AND MAY CONTINUE TO BE. THE REST IS NEGOTIABLE, I BELIEVE.

4. GODR POSITION. PRESIDENT BALAGUER FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT MENDEZ AND HIS GROUP WILL DO NOTHING TO HARM THE HOSTAGES BECAUSE HE KNOWS THEM NOT TO BE FANATICS AND BECAUSE HE IS CERTAIN THEY FULLY COMPREHEND THEIR FATE IS TIED TO THE WELFARE OF THE HOSTAGES. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES OF "HOSTAGES WITHIN HOSTAGES", HE APPEARS CONFIDENT THAT HE HAS THE UPPER HAND SINCE HE HAS THE CAPTORS SURROUNDED. (AS THE DEPT. WILL RECALL, ONE SERIOUS COMPLICATION OF THE COL. CROWLEY CASE WAS THAT HIS WHEREABOUTS AND THAT OF HIS CAPTORS WERE UNKNOWN). FROM BALAGUER'S STANDPOINT ALL THAT REMAINS IS TO (1) TAKE NO PROVOCATIVE ACTION, (2) REMAIN CALM AND PATIENT, AND (3) WEAR THE CAPTORS DOWN THROUGH PRESSURE TACTICS TO THE POINT WHERE THE FREEDOM OF THE HOSTAGES CAN BE OBTAINED AT THE LEAST POSSIBLE POLITICAL COST TO HIS GOVERNMENT. HE HOPES TO GET OUT OF THIS WITHOUT HAVING TO RELEASE ANYONE FROM JAIL. BALAGUER IS A MODERATE AND REASONABLE MAN. WHATEVER EMOTIONS HE IS EXPERIENCING IN THIS KIDNAPPING EVENT REMAIN UNDER TIGHT CONTROL OF HIS INTELLIGENCE AND INTELLECT AND HE CONTINUES TO MANIFEST, AS EVER, AN IMPERTURABLE AND RELAXED EXTERIOR. HE UNDOUBTEDLY EXPECTED THE KIDNAPPERS TO REJECT HIS OFFER OF GUARANTEEING THEIR LIVES AND REFRAINING FROM MALTREATING THEM. HE IS NOW BEGINNING TO PUT A BIT MORE PRESSURE ON THE CAPTORS. I WOULD EXPECT THAT IN A FEW DAYS HE WILL MAKE THE SAME OFFER AND TEST WHETHER HE RECEIVES ANY DIFFERENT RESPONSE (I DOUBT THAT HE WILL). AFTER SOME MORE PRESSURE OVER A PERIOD HE THINKS SUFFICIENT TO CONVINCE THE CAPTORS THAT THEY WOULD BE FORTUNATE TO GET OUT ALIVE, HE WILL MAKE HIS "FINAL" OFFER OF FREEDOM ABROAD.

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5. THE DOMINICAN MILITARY. OUR CONTACTS WITH THE TOP DOMINICAN MILITARY REVEALS THAT ALTHOUGH THEY ADOPT A HARD-LINE OF NOT CEDING TO THE CAPTORS' DEMANDS, NONE OF THEM ADVOCATE FORCEFUL ACTION, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF AIR FORCE CHIEF GEN. LLUBERES (FORMER CHIEF OF POLICE). FOR THE TIME BEING, IT IS A NON-MILITARY SHOW, THEY ACKNOWLEDGE. NONETHELESS, THE POLICE HAVE DIVERTED CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES TO THE VENEZUELAN CONSULATE AREA

AT THE EXPENSE OF NORMAL SECURITY DUTIES. THEY ARMED FORCES ARE NOT BUSY AND AT SOME POINT COULD BE CALLED IN. SHOULD THIS HAPPEN, AN ADDED POLITICAL DIMENSION WOULD BE PRESENT SINCE THE ARMED FORCES, UNLIKE THE POLICE, ARE HIGHLY CONSCIOUS OF THEIR POLITICAL IMAGE AND CLOUT.

6. EMBASSY - GODR COMMUNICATION. AFTER THE INITIAL CONFUSION RESULTING FROM AN UNEXPECTED DRAMATIC EVENT, WE HAVE NOW ESTABLISHED FIRM LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE RESPONSIBLE DOMINICAN AUTHORITIES

WITH REASONABLY EASY ACCESS.

7. TRI-PARTITISM. NO SUBSTANTIVE OR ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEM HAS ARISEN AS YET WITH MY SPANISH AND VENEZUELAN COLLEAGUES, ALTHOUGH CO-ORDINATION WITH THEM WHEN NECESSARY IS A BIT MORE WORK. NEEDLESS TO SAY, MOST OF THE TIME I AM MEETING WITH GODR OFFICIALS AND POLANCO ALONE. AS LONG AS NO PROBLEMS ARISE AMONG US, I SEE MERIT IN CONTINUING OCCASIONAL TRI-PARTISM AS AN INTENSIFIED MEANS OF PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT AND AS A SHOW OF SOLIDARITY TO THE PRESS AND PUBLIC. GODR OFFICIALS ARE AWARE THAT ALTHOUGH THE INTERESTS OF ALL THREE CHIEFS OF MISSION ARE GENERALLY IDENTICAL, WE ARE NOT LIMITING OURSELVES SOLELY TO CONCERTED DEMARCHES, AND THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO CONSULT WITH US ALL TOGETHER ON ALL MATTERS.

8. PRESS RELATIONS. ALL THE MAJOR US NEWS SERVICES AND TV NETWORKS ARE REPRESENTED HERE. BY BEING PLEASANT AND CONSIDERATE OF THEIR INTERESTS TO THE EXTENT WE CAN, WE ARE MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH THEM WITHOUT DIVULGING SUBSTANCE. OUR THEORY IS THAT THE LESS SUBSTANTIVE NEWS WE HAVE TO OFFER, THE MORE CORDIALLY WE HANDLE THE PRESS.

9. ASSESSMENT. BARRING UNEXPECTED COLLAPSE IN RESOLVE
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ON THE PART OF THE KIDNAPPERS, WE BELIEVE WE ARE IN FOR A FAIRLY LONG HAUL, I.E. WEEKS RATHER THAN DAYS. A DIALOGUE OF SORTS WAS INITIATED AND THAT CONSTITUTES SOME PROGRESS, BUT THE POSITIONS OF THE GODR AND CAPTORS ARE SO FAR APART THAT EVEN IF INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS WERE TO OCCUR, CONSIDERABLE TIME WOULD BE REQUIRED TO NARROW AND BRIDGE THE GAP. THIS PROLONGED TEST OF WILLS WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY INCREASES AND DECREASES OF PRESSURE BY THE GOVERNMENT UPON THE CAPTORS DEPENDING UPON THE DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY THE KIDNAPPERS DEMONSTRATE IN THEIR DEMANDS. WHAT HAS NOT YET BECOME DEFINITELY CLEAR IS THE LENGTHS TO WHICH THE CAPTORS ARE WILLING TO GO VIS--VIS THE HOSTAGES TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE GOVERNMENT THAT THEY ARE NOT WITHOUT POWER OF RETALIATION AGAINST GOVERNMENT PRESSURE. SO FAR, FORTUNATELY, NO HOSTAGE HAS BEEN REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN MALTREATED DESPITE ULTIMATUMS REGARDING "CONSEQUENCES". IF WE WERE TO ASSUME THAT THE

GOVERNMENT WILL INITIATE NO DRASTIC AND FORCEFUL ACTION AGAINST THE CAPTORS (I.E. IF WE ACCEPT THE PRESIDENT'S REPEATED ASSERTION TO THAT EFFECT) AND IF WE ACCEPT THE VIEW THAT THE CAPTORS RECOGNIZE THAT THEIR FATE IS INTIMATELY RELATED TO THE WELFARE OF THE HOSTAGES, THEN WE HAVE ESSENTIALLY A STAND-OFF REGARDING EXTREME MEASURES BY EITHER SIDE. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, TIME, PATIENCE AND ATTENTION TO BASIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS ARE THE GOVERNMENT'S (AND OURS, I WOULD SAY) BEST ALLIES FOR AN EVENTUAL NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT TO FREE THE HOSTAGES. THROUGHOUT THIS LONG PROCESS THE COMFORT AND HEALTH OF THE HOSTAGES COULD DETERIORATE MARKEDLY. AS FAR AS HUTCHINSON'S SPIRIT IS CONCERNED, SHE HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED QUALITIES THAT MAKE HER THE LEADING CANDIDATE FOR THE AWARD AS "THE PERSON WITH WHOM I'D MOST LIKE TO BE KIDNAPPED". WHAT CONCERNS ME MOST AT THIS POINT REGARDING THE PRESSURE TACTICS OF THE GODR, I.E. NO ELECTRICITY, NO WATER, NO TELEPHONE (AS FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE) AND THE DECISION NOT TO PERMIT FOOD OR WATER THIS EVENING, IS THE POSSIBILITY OF ILLNESS. WE HAVE, AS WE SEE IT, AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING PROTECTION ROLE TO PLAY REGARDING HUTCHINSON, NOT ONLY REGARDING HER LIFE AND FREEDOM BUT ALSO REGARDING HER HEALTH AND, WITH REASON, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HER COMFORT. WE SHALL CONTINUE OUR VIGOROUS EFFORTS TO FULFILL OUR RESPONSIBILITIES ON ALL FOUR COUNTS.

HURWITCH

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